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War to Peace", which complete the volume, hardly belong in the category of history, but are none the less agreeable reading.

GAILLARD HUNT.

The Mississippi Valley in British Politics: a Study of the Trade, Land Speculation, and Experiments in Imperialism culminating in the American Revolution. By CLARENCE WALWORTH ALVORD. In two volumes. (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company. 1916. Pp. 358; 396.)

HISTORIANS have, for some time past, pretty well understood certain phases of British policy in dealing with the territory acquired from France by the Peace of Paris. Professor Alvord has himself published a study of the Proclamation of 1763. It is a commonplace that troops were retained in America to defend the new possessions, and that the Stamp Act was intended to raise money to pay for the troops. Some of the many projects for western colonies have been more or less carefully investigated; and twenty years ago Professor Coffin gave us an excellent history of the Quebec Act of 1774. But hitherto no one has attempted a comprehensive study of the many problems involved in the possession of the western territory, or of the British policy of dealing with these problems, during the whole period from the Peace of Paris to the opening of the Revolution. To this task Professor Alvord, as his friends very well know, has given many years of unwearied and enthusiastic research; and the two substantial volumes which embody the results of his labor constitute an important contribution to the literature of the American Revolution.

The book is not one of those which, being made by rule, might have been made by any intelligent and well-trained historical researcher. "Clarence W. Alvord, his Book"—this, if it were inscribed on the title-page, would not be a misnomer. "A glance at the 'Bibliography'", the author says, "will prove that the attempt has conscientiously been made" to master an immense mass of material. I have glanced at the bibliography without being convinced of anything except that a very comprehensive list of titles had been got together and printed, with intelligent comments by the compiler. But I have read the book carefully (not an altogether superfluous statement for a reviewer to make, I dare say), and with great interest, and this it was that convinced me that the author had not only made an attempt to master his material, but that he had very well succeeded, which is quite a different thing. He has so far mastered his material that he seems to know the events and the people he describes, and not simply to know about them. For example, he says that Hillsborough, in forming his interpretation of the Proclamation, "was influenced by its consequences rather than by its antecedents. Of the genesis and original purposes of its provisions he was and remained ignorant, obstinately so." This, particularly the casually

thrown in "obstinately so", has the flavor of a contemporary judgment of Hillsborough by some one who had worked with him. And in general, by virtue of having lived long and intimately with his subject, of having at every step asked hard questions of his documents, of having impertinently dogged the steps of his aristocratic acquaintances until he knows them even if they refuse to recognize him, Professor Alvord has really assimilated his material, has as it were made the subject a kind of personal possession. The narrative accordingly has the breath of life in it; it seems to flow from the author's mind rather than to be a mere rescript of his notes. Decidedly, this is Professor Alvord's book, and a mighty good one it is.

The merit of the book does not consist in having achieved what might be called structural perfection. For this, the subject itself is partly responsible; being, as the author says, "double headed", it is not easily moulded into an artistic whole. Besides, Professor Alvord has not, I dare say, what some people would call the synthetic mind. He is so full of his subject that facts and ideas come crowding in, of their own accord as one may say, getting in each other's way at times, so that in the reader's mind at least the main drift and trend of the story is a little obscured by the very fullness of the narrative. Nevertheless it is this fullness that makes the book so interesting, and that gives it its chief value. Professor Alvord is at his best in dealing with the particular episode, in unravelling some tangled thread of personal intrigue or of factional politics, or in tracing the complicated and troubled fortunes of such an enterprise, for example, as that of the Vandalia Company. And therefore, if in the end one is not very clear what the British policy in dealing with the West really was, one has at least a lively sense of the conflicting interests which made the problem of the West a difficult one, as well as of the sort of influences which were bound to have a great part in determining British policy, whether in the West or elsewhere.

But if one finishes the book with no clear idea of what the British policy was, the real reason after all is that there was nothing which one can call a British policy; there was only a consistent vacillation between unworkable combinations of inconsistent policies. The Grenville ministry began with a policy of expansion under strict imperial control; control of the Indians, of Indian trade, of land grants, and of settlement. This policy depended upon an American revenue which was not forthcoming; and when the Stamp Act was repealed the Rockingham Whigs seemed to be, and Townshend clearly was, in favor of renouncing this policy; in favor, that is, of recalling the troops from the West, of abolishing the Indian Department, and of confining settlers to the region east of the Alleghanies. But Shelburne, as secretary for the Southern Department, got the ministry to agree to his own plan, which was different from either the Grenville or the Townshend plan. Shelburne favored expansion, but not under strict imperial control; he proposed to withdraw the major part of the troops and to abolish the Indian Depart-

ment, but instead of reserving the West to the Indians he wished to establish two new colonies there and let the Indians get on as best they could. Shelburne's plan, so carefully worked out, and almost adopted, was nevertheless "still-born"; for when the Bedford faction entered the Chatham ministry Hillsborough was made colonial secretary, and the plan which was really adopted was nobody's plan, but a combination of all plans, a kind of broad-bottomed plan, the effect of which was to abandon the West and the Indians to the tender mercies of the Americans. The result was "chaos"; and when, in 1773-1774, the ministry once more changed its policy, it completed the circle by attempting, in the Quebec Act, to "throw the protection of the imperial power over at least a part of the Mississippi Valley". With all these plans the author has dealt very fully, seeking for their origin and describing their fate "within the kaleidoscopic changes of ministries and underneath the hot strife of factions". It was indeed not a British policy, but "British muddling in the West", that failed in the end.

What was the connection between "British muddling in the West" and the Revolution? Professor Alvord often implies that the connection was important; but I confess not to have understood very well what he thinks the precise nature of that connection was. "I have a vision", he says in the preface, "of some future critic chuckling over my rashness in writing a drama of the pre-revolutionary era with several well known Hamlets omitted". But at the end of the second volume he says:

Thus there culminated at the same time two series of events, one eastern and one western, which had for years run parallel, so closely interwoven that any attempt to understand the one without a knowledge of the other must inevitably fail. If historians would interpret rightly the causes of the American Revolution and the birth of the new nation, they must not let their vision be circumscribed by the sequence of events in the East.

To this I agree; but then I don't see where the rashness comes in. If, however, Professor Alvord wishes us to understand that of the two parallel series of events the western series is the central and all-important one, and that this pre-revolutionary drama is alone a sufficient prelude to the Revolution, why then he is indeed most rash. For certainly anyone who, knowing only that war broke out between Britain and her colonies in 1775, should read Professor Alvord's book to find out the causes of the war, would still be absolutely at a loss to understand why there should have been any war.

I take it that Professor Alvord's rashness is mainly confined to the preface, a firecracker which he has thrown out to disturb conventional people. Later on he says that the revenue measures shifted the burden of discussion

from the comprehensive program to these particular phases of it. Upon an incident of the colonial policy there was formed a battle line and by

the smoke of the engagement the original purposes of the ministry were so obscured that only occasionally did a later minister catch a clear view of what the real issue *should have been*.¹

The sense of this seems to be that if ministers had been wise and patriots not perverse there would have been no revolution. Agreed. But the fact is that ministers were not wise and patriots were perverse, and the question of taxation appeared so momentous that, as Professor Alvord says in another place, "the critical situation of the West was often totally obscured". That, in any question of the pre-revolutionary drama, is to put the problem of the West, whatever its academic importance may have been, precisely in its proper place historically; while it had a bearing, and at times an important bearing, upon the conflict over taxation and legislative independence, it was in fact largely obscured by this conflict, and must for that very reason occupy, in any explanation of the causes of the Revolution, a strictly subordinate place. That place, however, cannot henceforth be denied it, thanks to Professor Alvord's book. But I wish Professor Alvord would explain why the writing of a good book is likely to be regarded, even in this conventional world, as a rash act.

CARL BECKER.

David Thompson's Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784–1812. Edited by J. B. TYRRELL. [Publications of the Champlain Society, vol. XII.] (Toronto: The Society. 1916. Pp. xciii, 582.)

THIS beautiful and well-appointed volume is designed to give to the public, in permanent and creditable form, David Thompson's narrative of his own travels and explorations in the Canadian Northwest and in the old Oregon Territory. It embraces only the period of his active service with the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Fur companies, and terminates at about the year 1813, or almost exactly midway of Thompson's career.

The value of the *Narrative* as historic authority is of course quite different from that of the *Journals* which have been separately published. The *Journals* are definite records, set down at the time of the events to which they relate, and thus constitute fixed and unalterable data. To such data must always be assigned the highest historic value. The *Narrative*, on the other hand, was written late in life (the author was between seventy and eighty) and deals with recollections of men and events of a period which closed more than thirty years before. Naturally such reminiscences are liable to inaccuracies of memory and to a new coloring as seen through the misty, and often painful, light of advanced age. But Thompson seems to have kept himself free, to a remarkable extent, of these dangers. His note-books were always at

¹ I. 228. Italics mine.